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HFA receives AIA Award

Summary: The timeless architecture of the Ralph Rapson-designed Humanities Fine Arts building has been recognized with an AIA Minnesota 25-Year Award.

(November 14, 2005)-The Humanities Fine Arts Center at the University of Minnesota, Morris is the recipient of an American Institute of Architects Minnesota 25-Year Award. Designed in the early 1970s by Ralph Rapson, Fellow, American Institute of Architects, Ralph Rapson and Associates, Minneapolis, the structure houses facilities for speech communication, theatre arts, music and fine arts academic disciplines for the Morris campus.

The building was constructed in two phases. Completed in 1974, the complex won an AIA Minnesota Honor Award the following year the jury at that time commented that the Arts Center was “a distinctive, expressive complex...clearly organized, with good scale and is obviously a stimulating yet unimposing environment for students.” The 2005 25-Year Award jury shared similar thoughts: “The Center still fits well into its site and connects well to other spaces on campus. Its scale is effective and handled well, it has utilitarian simplicity yet incorporates quality materials and integrates them with finesse.” According to the AIA, it is a testament to the architect, Ralph Rapson, and the building’s original design that few changes have been made to the Center and the complex is still a vibrant part of the University campus today.

AIA Minnesota established the 25-Year Award in 1981 to recognize exemplary architectural projects, 25 years or older, that have withstood the test of time. The jurors critiqued the seven submissions this year based on information assembled in a binder from the architect/architectural firm. Jurors do not visit the project sites. Jury members were Leon Satkowski, professor at the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. Nina Ebbighausen, AIA, architect at Architectural Alliance in Minneapolis and Vincent James, principal of Vincent James Associates Architects also in Minneapolis. The jury thoughtfully considered a building’s social impact, the complexity of its program and the state of its current condition as factors in weighing each entry’s architectural importance.

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